

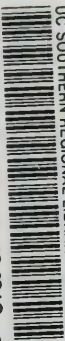
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The Strawberry Patch

and

Leaves from Life

by

“Noel”

(Mabel Christmas-Harvey)



Book is complete
The author Noel
(Mabel Quirkos-Hunt)

The Strawberry Patch

The Strawberry Patch
and
Leaves from Life

by
“*Noel*”
(*Mabel Christmas-Harvey*)

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NIAGARA

Penned in for years, with heavy duties pressed,
In time of War, with urgent toil unceasing;
My mind too tired when I could take rest
To pencil down the load of thoughts increasing.

Impressions, thoughts that hammered to express
Swiftly the tumult of experience growing.
But, from my pressing duties no recess,
No time to loose the stream, and set it flowing.

Now Freedom's come! The burden of past years,
The thoughts and fancies so long unexpressed
Burst forth a torrent, rushing out its tears,
Like a Niagara that cannot be repressed.

MUST BEAUTY DIE?

Red, orange, yellow, glowing autumn tints
Reflected in the river drifting by,
The sun shines brilliantly, the blue sky glints,
Abounding beauty here delights the eye.

Must beauty die? One frost, one heavy shower,
The glowing colours cast upon the ground.
Curtains of blinding mist in one short hour
Destroy the loveliness once all around.

So is our life, when happy friendship shatters,
Wiped out within one day by bitter lies;
Destroying years of comradeship that matters,
Misting all light and colour from our eyes.

Thus beauty dies! The brightness of life faded,
Bitter futility pervades our life.
Our faith in all our fellowmen is shaded,
Reacting in our hearts with pain and strife.

Hold on to this! Though winter's coldness follows,
Spring comes again, new beauty will appear.
Returning with the sunshine and the swallows,
Upspringing life will bring new friendships dear.

INDULGENCE

When the fate of the World is deciding,
The Universe trembles and quakes,
All responsible onus deriding
These women still queue up for cakes !

Denying all need for endeavour,
To help things for other folks' sakes;
They waste precious hours of their leisure,
These women still queue up for cakes !

They stand there and vapidly chatter,
No thought for the time that it takes;
While thousands of children are starving,
These women still queue up for cakes !

Oh ! Cease from your selfish concerning,
Do something for pure pity's sake.
These children are starving and yearning . . .
Stop stuffing yourselves with rich cake!

CHILDHOOD

The ghastly horror of the past few years
Has driven all the beauty from our life,
We seek it unavailing through our tears—
There's nothing left but bitterness and strife.

The children cannot play, they are too weak,
Too starved and terror-stricken to enjoy
The fun and games that normal children seek;
And thousands of them never had a toy!

They sit there vacant-eyed, gazing around.
At times they're hardly conscious, half asleep;
Their anxious eyes turning upon the ground
To find some scrap of garbage on a heap.

They have no knowledge in their piteous lives
Of Home and parents loving, gay and kind;
The feeling that a settled home life gives,
A peaceful, happy tranquil frame of mind.

The question of what wars are won or lost,
Which country triumphs in the battlefield;
When these are gained at such a ghastly cost,
What satisfaction can this conflict yield?

SIGHTLESS

I saw a glorious rainbow in the sky,
A perfect archway o'er a city street.
So strong it's glowing hues one could descry
A second arch beneath the first repeat.

Eager to share my joy I said to one,
"Look up and see the beauty all around."
He gazed lacklustre eyed, perceiving none,
Then turned his vapid gaze back to the ground.

One little minute from the many hours,
A widow's mite of time to tribute pay
To beauty far beyond our mortal powers,
Inspiring Hope, before it fades away.

Are minds too clogged with mundane cares and things,
Forgetting God's own promise that of yore
Saved Mortals, when a dove with fluttering wings
Brought Hope Eternal to man's very door?

THE STRAWBERRY PATCH

Taking Tally

"Emma! Emma! one for me!"

Voices calling high and low
Taking tally of our picking,
Counting punnets as we go.

Hunting 'midst the glossy leaves
Rosy berries ripe and luscious.
But the best you'll always find
Have been gathered by the thrushes!

Knees are aching, backs are breaking.
Ladies fair who eat our spoils
Have you ever 'midst enjoyment
Realised our painful toils?

Forty, fifty, in a punnet,
Each one picked by hand with care,
For a penny paid each punnet . . .
Thus you get your dainty fare.

But, a moment . . . breath suspended . . .
Every eye is on the gate . . .
YES! the Billy's coming, teatime!
Not a moment now to wait.

All spring up with joyful chatter,
Some with groans, and some with laughter,
What does all the backache matter?
(Forget the two hours coming after !)

Gathered in the barn, relaxing,
Laughter, chatter, chaff, and fun,
Time is up, once more to business,
Out we go into the sun.

Ladies, in your hours of leisure,
Eating strawberries at your ease,
While the lovely fruit gives pleasure
Think kindly of the pickers, please !

RECOGNITION

We meet with thousands in our crowded lives,
In friendly ways, and in our business too.
Yet sometimes, flashingly a moment gives
Us recognition of one once we knew

In former times, before this present span.
We know at once a true friend we have met,
With half-formed knowledge, not yet clear to man
A glimpse of fleeting memory we get.

This recognition cannot be mistaken,
An instant of clear vision there is given.
Friends we shall meet again when we awaken,
When the dim veil of this life once is riven.

This fleeting knowledge helps us on our way.
It seldom comes, yet when it does we see
Through clearer eyes attaining to the day
When from our earthbound trammels we are free.

A Presence close beside us, yet unseen.
A soul upsoaring in a lark's sweet song.
The knowledge of no barriers between.
That "Seeing face to face" for which we long.

TO JEANNIE

A hank of wiry hair, two shining eyes,
A wagging tail, four paws that run to meet me,
Looking so happy, yet extremely wise;
What should I do without my Pal to greet me?

Tired and disheartened, wearied by the day.
So disillusioned too by Mortals' tricks . . .
My canny little Scottie smooths away
The frets and worries when my hand she licks.

Only a dog? Yet sympathy is there,
And understanding too of one she loves.
Always so willing to respond and share
My burdens, (but she loves to chew my gloves!)

If such love and true fidelity
By "Only a dog" to us are given,
Since love is the only true Reality
Surely, somewhere there is a doggy Heaven?

IMPERMANENCE

To those of us born in the happier years
 When values were not changing day by day;
With minds unclouded by to-morrow's fears,
 All sense of permanence is swept away.

How free and happy all our younger life,
 Our simple joys, each little carefree plan.
Now we're beset with *never-ending strife*
 Between the Nations, separating man.

All the sweet, lovely, homely life is gone.
 The little things that made for happy living,
While bitter strife and misery grows on,
 Each at the other's throat forever striving.

The painful contrast of our early days
 And now . . . we cannot even forward look..
Unknowing where will trend our future ways
 What next surprise is written in Life's Book.

The tranquil meadows studded with bright flowers
 Are turned to shambles, battle-scarred, and bare.
The bluebells in the woodland's misty bowers
 You seek; but only find bomb craters there.

MY SON

"I'se your little Boy," he trustingly said,
As his eyes gazed into mine.
Oh! deep blue eyes of a sapphire hue,
So innocent, so Divine.

"Yes, always my own little Son," I said,
Never guessing the tearing pain
That would break my heart in the years ahead,
When I longed for that wee voice in vain.

For many, and long though the years may be,
No matter what may befall;
No joy or sorrow that comes to me
Can ever my darling recall.

For a Mother's heart has a quivering string
That chance happenings can twang with pain,
When some word, or a flower, or a lock of hair
Revive the past, and its pain.

Sometimes, when I gaze at the sky at night,
When the stars are all a-shine,
I see in the blue of the sapphire hue
Those eyes that spoke love to mine.

TRANSITION

When Autumn comes, the softly falling leaves
 Shaded in russet, brown, and green and gold,
Drifting away, and leaving bare the trees
 Exposed to Winter, still, and bare and cold.

Yet, in the heart of what is seeming Death
 Still is the living sap and strength alive,
Only awaiting for the first warm breath
 Of Spring to touch them, making them revive.

So are our lives, when having lived our span,
 Things that are useless fall and drift away;
Leaving within reality that began
 To shape our words and actions day by day.

The inner life, that living flame lives on,
 And burns away the dross, the care and strife.
All hindrances to progress now are gone,
 The more we lose our hold on mortal life.

We, for a while, are resting after toil,
 Studying carefully our work now past.
The petty leaves are buried in the soil,
 We reach clear understanding now, at last.

“MONTY”

An exile from my Home in years of war,
Thwarted from joining in the great affray,
Knowing my people weighted down with care;
Longing to help and cheer them on their way. . .

I heard the news that “MONTY’S coming here!”
We must all see him, it’s our only chance!
The little children wave their flags and cheer,
The grown-ups spend their time in song and dance.

That upright form standing upon the seat
As the car passed, a flash, and it was gone!
Yet, for an instant when our eyes did meet,
That glance gave me the strength to carry on.

That Leader strong whose firm belief in God,
Undaunted by men’s gibes still carried on,
Inspired to do things that no other could,
When many people thought that hope was gone.

Those onlookers who cheered, and went their way . . .
(The show is over, let’s go home to tea,)
Don’t realize the bright uplifting ray
The sight of “Monty” passing was to me.

THE VORTEX

In these days of rush and bustle,
 Frenzied business, shopping done;
Everlasting push and hustle,
 Tired out, but still keep on!

Filling forms, and cutting coupons
 Red tape binding all we do;
Thwarting natural conditions . . .
 Life is like a crazy Zoo!

Customers are treated roughly,
 Might as well be bits of dirt.
Shop assistants answer gruffly
 Rudeness, snarlings sometimes hurt.

People running, wild and haggard,
 Catching trams, and falling off.
Woe betide the careless laggard!
 Tram conductors sneer and scoff!

Everything in life's much harder.
 All the things you ask for "Gone".
Knitting brows won't fill your larder . . .
 Here's a nice stale penny bun!

All Inspectors giving permits,
Life is filled with care and strife.
Makes us wish we could be hermits,
What a FREEDOM, what a life!

Can't do this, must get permissions,
Strings and regulations weave
Galling, worrying conditions.
Ask "PERMISSION" soon to breathe!

What a "FREEDOM" for our women
Working forty hours a day.
While the men of course, go racing . . .
They, poor things MUST have their play!

ENLIGHTENMENT

A glorious light o'er Earth and Sea, is glowing,
Up in the blue larks soar to Heaven's gate,
Yet stand I 'mid this beauty all unknowing
Wrapped in soft darkness none can penetrate.

The lights and shadows o'er the hills are fleeting
Fair cornfields waving, murmuring distant rills,
The mystic blue where sea and sky are meeting . . .
Darkness alone my blinded vision fills.

The shadows darker o'er my path are creeping,
Belovèd faces hidden from my sight;
Memory alone can hold them in my keeping,
Show me the loving glance of soft eyes' light.

Groping amid the ever deepening darkness,
Helpless and hopeless in the utmost gloom . . .
Striving to hear some sound to guide my footsteps
Inwardly fighting 'gainst my bitter doom . . .

Softly I feel a Hand laid on my shoulder
Guiding me gently in a narrow way,
Making my faltering footsteps stronger, bolder,
Close to my ear a sweet voice seems to say . . .

“Thy Father knoweth all thy grief and sorrow,
He watcheth o’er thy footsteps all the way;
His love shall guide thee to a bright tomorrow
Fairer by far than you can dream today.

“Have Faith and Courage, on His Presence leaning,
Never bewail thy loss of earthly sight,
And He shall show to thee the hidden meaning
“Thou shalt come out of darkness into light.”

“Sweet Peace shall fill thy soul with joy unending,
And loving kindness cheer thee on thy way.
Even amid the gloom new brightness lending
Until you reach the land of Perfect Day.”

(By permission of *Home and Country*. First prize winning poem.)

MIRAGE

I had a friend, I thought I had a friend !

Our thoughts, and our ambitions too, we shared,
A second self, on whom I could depend . . .

I was so happy to have one who cared !

We had gay times, and chatter, lots of fun,

With music, and such pleasures too, together.

Our meetings, that when all our day's work done

We both enjoyed in any sort of weather.

She used to come to meet me, running fast,

And smiling with delight to see me there.

Alas ! That friendship was too good to last—

And jealous tongues destroyed that friendship fair !

Yet I had thought that friendship strong and true.

Disloyalty, unfair suspicion dared

To shatter everything 'twixt me and you—

I was so happy to have one who cared.

SAVE THE CHILDREN

The charm is gone from life,
The old lighthearted gaiety, the joie de vivre,
Old, simple pleasures, free from care and strife—
Even in happy moments nightmares weave
Their black thread of known horrors still abounding,
Where little children die, no love surrounding.

If, for a passing moment transient things
Lift from our hearts this weight of misery,
Instantly, in a flash, remembrance brings
The cry of starving children piteously.
Knowing no reason why they suffer so,
Wandering, unwanted, trying to find food;
Having no homes, no place where they can go,
Only experiencing evil, never good.

Not in our lives again the old lighthearted charm!
Our hearts too torn with pain cannot be gay.
Our task to feed, and keep these children warm,
All thought of selfish pleasure swept away.
O! Thou, Who carest for a sparrow's fall,
Make us all strong to do our duty plain.
We pray Thee heed Thy little children's call,
Help us at least to mitigate such pain.

(By kind permission of the *Star-Sun*.)

RELEASE

Oh ! Fragrant gardens, beauty filled and bright,
 So colourful and gay, what heartaches give
Those prisoners in flats by day and night,
 Who cannot choose the way that they would live !

I know so well what poignant longing grips
 True garden-lovers penned in city walls;
Who love the good earth on their finger tips;
 The peace, the tuneful sound of songbirds' calls.

The joy of peeping leaves that spring from seed,
 The feeling of an honest day's work done.
Closeness to Mother Earth that fills some need,
 Refreshment in the touch of rain and sun..

Immured as I have been in long years past,
 By duties bound to allocate the hours,
What joy to own a plot of land at last,
 To realize my dreams of fruit and flowers !

CLUB SONG

(Sung to the tune of "Pack up your Troubles".)

We are all Sisters journeying on life's way
Side by side.

Sharing our joys and sorrows, grave and gay,
Staunch friends true and tried.

All together studying to help the world along . . . so . . .
Join in our chorus now, and let us sing
Our own Club Song.

Our Club's a Centre from which radiates
A sympathy
To all the lonely ones we would be mates
In cheerful harmony.

Our Members keeping in their hearts
The need for happy song . . . so . . .
Help in our efforts to uplift, and sing
Our own Club Song!

UNDERSTANDING

Let us not wail that we're "Misunderstood" !
That's of no consequence, useless as shifting sand.
Our task to find in other folks what's good,
And try our best to lend a helping hand.

Stop carping at what others do to us,
Too hard at work to care what people say.
And, if they're spiteful, they're not worth a fuss
Onlookers make false judgements, anyway !

What matters are our actions kind and true.
Cheering the doleful ones, let's stir them up
To forget self in helpful things they do,
Filling with happy thoughts some empty cup.

What happens to us, mostly we deserve,
We're none of us so perfect after all.
But we are put upon this Earth to serve,
With open ears accepting Duty's call.

If we are out to do the best we can,
No one misunderstands sincerity.
We are not accountable to any man
If we ourselves express sweet charity.

EVANESCENT

Elusive, yet so swift we cannot hold

 In conscious thought the message that they bring
That "Intuition" sensed, but yet untold,
 Renewing flashes of some fore-learned thing.

One fleeting moment, for an instant's space

 We grasp the vision only half revealed.
Inspired conception, lighting Time and Space,
 Intangible to grasp, half unrevealed.

How to impart these unsubstantial things?

 So dimly seen, and yet, no less a fact?
That gently touch us like an angel's wings.
 But, having known, *upon that knowledge act.*

AWAKENING

How, and in what visible form, if any
Will our wakening consciousness arise
When we rouse from our long, deep dreaming
After our flight upwinged through the skies?

This hiatus twixt life and things of earth,
Giving us time to contemplate at leisure
The why and wherefore of our efforts' worth;
Seeing as we are seen, measure for measure:

Solving, with wisdom guided to perceive
Why all the heartbreak, why the unsolved pain
Knowing ourselves now, we no longer grieve,
Uplifted and refreshed, we start again.

Now from the hindrance of our bodies winging,
All consciousness of Time and Place is gone.
Freed from the weight that hinders our upspringing,
The sense Eternal that is Love, lives on.

FLORAL EMBLEMS

Those heaped up masses of bright fragrant flowers
Are valueless to us when we are gone.
Would they had cheered us in some weary hours,
Had given us the strength to carry on!

A simple posy offered by a child
An unexpected brightness can convey.
The burden lightened for us, and we smiled
And passed a cheery word along our way.

The little gift of flowers can say so much,
Expressing sympathy in joy or pain.
Without a word the flowers can gently touch
And lift us up to happiness again.

Alas! too late we offer gifts of flowers
To those who would have loved them so in life!
Yearning for sympathy in the heart's dark hours
When loneliness and bitterness are rife.

It's when we are alive, and still are here
Needing kind thoughts, appreciation given,
A few bright flowers, a word of hope or cheer.
Don't wait until your friends have gone to Heaven!

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